

HIGH ALTITUDE SCRUBFOWL

WILLIAM R. COOPER

On 18 October 1987 at 12:50 at an altitude of c. 2600 m whilst climbing up the ridge just beyond the "Treefern Forest" on the way down to Myola (Oro Province) I heard a loud scratching from a spot some 5 m above me. I stopped for about 3 minutes then continued up the track. When I reached the spot where I estimated the noise must have arisen, a large bird flew out over my head and perched on a tree level with me but some 10 m out from the ridge. The most prominent features which I noticed were that the bird had a very distinct peaked cap, slim pale bill, a bare pinkish neck and dark legs. The bird remained perched for more than 5 minutes and the only further note I recorded was an indistinct olive-green wash on the wings.

I did not refer to the Field Guide (Beehler *et al.* 1986) until I was over the ridge and some 200 m lower. It was clear that the bird I saw was a Common Scrubfowl *Megapodius freycinet*, but I was surprised to see that the bird was not recorded from this altitude. Beehler *et al.* give 'Sea level to 500 m (highest 2100 m)', and I was at least 500 m higher than the maximum given.

I have been unable to find any other record of the bird at this altitude although Coates (1986) says that *M. f. affinis* probably occurs to 2000 m.

Beehler, B.M., T.K. Pratt & D.A. Zimmerman. 1986. *Birds of New Guinea*. Princeton University Press.

Coates, B.J. 1985. *The Birds of Papua New Guinea*. Vol 1. Dove Publications.

Address: PO Box 288, Port Moresby, P.N.G.

EURASIAN STARLING *STURNUS VULGARIS* AT MOITAKA

BRIAN FINCH

On 14 August 1985 I found an adult winter-plumaged Eurasian Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* feeding amongst Comb-crested Jacanas *Irediparra gallinacea* on the banks of the sewage-treatment lagoons at Moitaka, on the outskirts of Port Moresby.

This constitutes the second record for this species in Papua New Guinea, the previous record being in the same locality fifteen years previously (Coates 1970).

Later in the morning the bird was also seen by Bill and Laura Oddie. All of the observers are only too familiar with this species elsewhere. The bird was very wary, and attempts to photograph it failed.

The bird was seen over the following two weeks, but then, thankfully, disappeared.

Coates, B. 1970. The Common Starling - a bird new to New Guinea. PNGBS Newsletter 59: 3.

Address: P.O.Box 59749, Nairobi, Kenya.

WHITE PYGMY-GOOSE - A NEW SPECIES FOR THE PORT MORESBY AREA

ROGER K. HICKS¹, CHRIS H.B. EASTWOOD² AND WILL F. GLYNN³

On 22 November 1987, at 14:30, a female White Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* was observed on Aroa Lagoon, Central Province, c. 100 km north-west of Port Moresby. The following description is from notes taken at the time: At first the bird was swimming in a channel of open water, between dense beds of water weed, less than 50 m from the shore. It was similar in size to Green Pygmy-Geese *N. pulchellus* which were present in large numbers, but smaller than the Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa*. It had a black bill, a dark crown and a dark smudge about the eye. No obvious white supercilium was noted. The rest of the head, neck, breast and flanks were quite a bright white. It was a much "cleaner" looking bird than expected from the illustration in Beehler *et al.* (1986) so that we considered at first that it was a male in eclipse plumage. After five minutes it flew to another channel further out in the lagoon and was eventually lost to sight. In flight the back and wings appeared grey with a narrow white bar across the tips of the secondaries. The bird was therefore identified as a female.

There are no previous published records of this species in southern P.N.G. (Coates 1985; Beehler *et al.* 1986). The Asian subspecies *N. c. coromandelianus* is resident in the Sepik basin, north-western P.N.G. and Lake Kandeep in the central highlands (Beehler *et al.* 1986). The Australian subspecies *N. c. albipennis* is resident in north-east Australia (Slater *et al.* 1986), although "it can be expected to occur as a vagrant in southern New Guinea" (Beehler *et al.* 1986).

The origins of the bird at Aroa are not clear. Illustrations of the female of the Asian subspecies (Beehler *et al.* 1986, King *et al.* 1984) show a dusky looking bird while illustrations of the Australian subspecies (Slater *et al.* 1986; Simpson & Day 1984) show a much whiter appearance. The bird at Aroa appeared most similar to the illustrations of the Australian subspecies. Unfortunately none of the field guides consulted deal with both subspecies and the written accounts in the above four field guides and in others (Coates 1985; Pizzey 1983; MacDonald 1973; Rand & Gilliard 1967) are very similar, although describing different subspecies.

Beehler, B.M., T.K. Pratt & D.A. Zimmerman. 1986. *Birds of New Guinea*. Princeton University Press.

Coates, B.J. 1985. *The Birds of Papua New Guinea*. Vol 1. Dove Publications.

King, B., M. Woodcock & E.C. Dickinson 1984. *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia*. Collins.

MacDonald, D. 1973. *Birds of Australia*. Reed.

Pizzey, G. 1983. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. Collins.

Rand, A.L. & E.T. Gilliard. 1967. *Handbook of New Guinea Birds*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Simpson, K. & N. Day. 1984. *The Birds of Australia*. Lloyd O'Neil.

Slater, P., P. Slater & R. Slater. 1986. *The Slater Guide to Australian Birds*. Rigby.

Addresses: ¹ c/o N.C.C., P.O. Wards Strip, Waigani, P.N.G.

² P.O. Box 921, Port Moresby, P.N.G.

³ P.O. Box 477, Boroko, N.C.D., P.N.G.